Janet Lindner Spielberg (SBN 221926) Joseph N. Kravec, Jr. (pro hac to be filed) 1 LAW OFFICES OF JANET LINDNER Ellen M. Doyle (pro hac to be filed) 2 STEMBER FEINSTEIN DOYLE **SPIELBERG** 12400 Wilshire Boulevard, #400 PAYNE & CORDES LLC 3 Los Angeles, California 90025 Allegheny Building, 17th Floor Tel: (310) 392-8801 429 Forbes Avenue 4 Fax: (310) 278-5938 Pittsburgh, PA 15219 Tel: (412) 281-8400 Email: ilspielberg@ilslp.com 5 Fax: (412) 281-1007 Michael D. Braun (SBN 167416) Email: <u>ikravec@stemberfeinstein.com</u> BRAUN LAW GROUP, P.C. Email: edoyle@stemberfeinstein.com 7 10680 West Pico Boulevard, Suite 280 Los Angeles, California 90064 8 Tel: (310) 836-6000 Fax: (310) 836-6010 9 Email: service@braunlawgroup.com 10 E-filing ATTORNEYS FOR PLAINTIFF 11 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COLUMN U.S. DISTRICT COURT
OF CALIFORNIA 12 13 FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 14 4387 15 SKYE ASTIANA on behalf of herself and all others similarly situated, 16 **CLASS ACTION** Plaintiff. COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES, **EQUITABLE, DECLARATORY AND** 18 v. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF BEN & JERRY'S HOMEMADE, INC., 19 **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL** Defendant. 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

COMPLAINT for Damages, Equitable, Declaratory and Injunctive Relief

Plaintiff, by her attorneys, brings this class action against Defendant Ben & Jerry's Homemade, Inc. ("B&J" or "Defendant"), on her own behalf and on behalf of all others similarly situated, and alleges as follows based upon the investigation of her counsel:

INTRODUCTION

- 1. This is a class action on behalf of a California class of consumers who purchased Ben & Jerry's Homemade, Inc.'s "all natural" Ice Cream products which contained alkalized cocoa beginning September 28, 2006 through the present ("Class Period"). Since at least 2006, B&J has packaged, marketed and sold its Ice Cream products as being "all natural" despite the fact they contain alkalized cocoa a non-natural processed ingredient that additionally contains potassium carbonate, a man made, synthetic ingredient.¹
- 2. Throughout the Class Period, B&J prominently displayed the moniker "all natural" on the labels of its Ice Cream products, cultivating a healthy and socially conscious image in an effort to promote the sale of these products. Indeed, as a result of this false and misleading labeling B&J was able to sell these products to thousands of consumers in California and throughout the United States and to profit handsomely from these transactions.
- 3. Plaintiff alleges B&J's conduct violates the unlawful, unfair and fraudulent prongs of California's Business and Professions Code section 17200, et. seq. (the "UCL"), and the California Business & Professions Code 17500 et. seq. (the "FAA"). Plaintiff also alleges that B&J's conduct is grounds for restitution on the basis of quasi-contract/unjust enrichment.

PARTIES

4. Plaintiff Skye Astiana is currently a resident of Klamath Falls, Oregon. From at least September 28, 2006 to September, 2007, Plaintiff Astiana was domiciled in California, residing in San Francisco and Mill Valley, California. While Ms. Astiana was a California resident, she purchased on multiple occasions B&J's All Natural Chocolate Fudge Brownie Ice Cream as well as other of B&J's Ice Cream products at the Whole Foods grocery store near her then residence in Mill

As used throughout this Complaint, "Ice Cream" products includes B&J's "all natural" premium Ice Creams, yogurts and sorbets identified in paragraph 18 of this Complaint.

Valley California.² Ms. Astiana believed the Ice Cream she purchased was all natural and relied on this representation in making the purchase. Upon information and belief, the Ice Cream Ms. Astiana purchased contained cocoa processed with alkali - a <u>non</u>-natural processed ingredient that additionally contains potassium carbonate, a man made, synthetic ingredient.

5. Defendant Ben & Jerry's Homemade, Inc. was founded in 1977 in Vermont and currently maintains its headquarters at 30 Community Drive, South Burlington, VT 05403-6828. From its inception, to the present day, B&J claims to produce a wide variety of super premium Ice Cream, Ice Cream novelties, low fat Ice Cream, low fat yogurt and sorbet, using Vermont dairy products and high quality, all natural ingredients. Ben & Jerry's products are distributed nationwide in supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, franchise Ben & Jerry's scoop shops, restaurants and other venues. In 2000 B&J's was acquired by Unilever, one of the world's largest consumer products companies in a deal estimated at \$326 million.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 6. Jurisdiction of this Court is proper under 28 U.S.C. §1332, as complete diversity between the parties exists. Representative Plaintiff Skye Astiana was a California resident at the time she purchased Defendant's products at issue in this litigation. Defendant's principle place of business is Vermont and it is a wholly owned subsidiary of Unilever plc, a foreign corporation.
- 7. Upon information and belief, the amount in controversy exceeds \$5,000,000 for Representative Plaintiff and Class members collectively, exclusive of interest and costs, by virtue of the combined purchase prices paid by Plaintiff and the Class, and the profit reaped by Defendant from its transactions with Plaintiff and the Class, as a direct and proximate result of the wrongful conduct alleged herein, and by virtue of the injunctive and equitable relief sought.
- 8. Venue is proper within this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and (c). Defendant maintains offices and has agents, transacts business or is found within this judicial district. Moreover, a substantial portion of the underlying transactions and events complained of herein occurred, and affected persons and entities, in this judicial district, and Defendant has

The other ice cream products include Cherry Garcia, Chocolate, Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough, Chocolate Fudge Brownie, Chubby Hubby, Chunky Monkey and New York Super Fudge Chunk.

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received substantial compensation from such transactions and business activity in this judicial district, including as the result of purchases of Defendant's Ice Cream products from retail locations herein. Finally, Defendant inhabits and/or may be found in this judicial district, and the interstate trade and commerce described herein is and has been carried out in part within this judicial district.

BACKGROUND

- 9. The cocoa bean is a seed that grows on trees native to South America. The fermented and dried cocoa seed is the basic ingredient in chocolate. Chocolate is a name given to products that are derived from cocoa which are then mixed with some sort of fat (e.g. cocoa butter, oil) and finely powdered sugar to produce a solid edible product.
- 10. To make chocolate, the beans are processed, roasted, cracked and shelled. The resulting pieces called nibs are further processed into a chocolate liquor, butter or powder. The cocoa powder is typically used in the flavoring of Ice Creams.
- 11. Unsweetened baking cocoa powder is typically rendered in one of two forms: a natural cocoa or a non-natural version known as Dutch-process cocoa. Both are made by pulverizing partially defatted chocolate liquor and removing nearly all the cocoa butter. Natural cocoa is light in color and somewhat acidic with a strong chocolate flavor. Non-natural dutch-process cocoa is processed with alkali to neutralize its natural acidity. Dutch cocoa is slightly milder in taste, with a deeper and warmer color than natural cocoa. Dutch-process cocoa is frequently used when the product calls for the blending of cacao with liquids. Unfortunately, Dutch processing destroys most of the flavonols present in cocoa -- the water-soluble plant pigments that are believed to give dark chocolate health benefits in the form of antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties.

ALKALIZED COCOA IS UNNATURAL

12. Although the FDA does not directly regulate the term "natural," the FDA has established a policy defining the outer boundaries of the use of that term by clarifying that a product is <u>not</u> natural if it contains color, artificial flavors, or synthetic substances.

http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm094536.htm and http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/Transparency/Basics/ucm214868.htm.

- 13. The FDA also does recognize alkalization as a non-natural process and accordingly requires that "when any optional alkali ingredient is used, the name of the food shall be accompanied by the statement "Processed with alkali", or "Processed with -----", the blank being filled in with the common or usual name of the specific alkali ingredient used in the food."
- 14. In addition, Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream products containing alkalized cocoa are processed with potassium carbonate which is a recognized synthetic substance.

BEN & JERRY'S USE OF ALKALIZED COCOA

- 15. American consumers are health conscious and frequently take nutrition information into consideration in selecting and purchasing food items. Product package labels, including nutrition labels, are vehicles that convey nutrition information to consumers which they can and do use to make purchasing decisions. As noted by Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Margaret Hamburg during an October 2009 media briefing, "[s]tudies show that consumers trust and believe the nutrition facts information and that many consumers use it to help them build a healthy diet."
- 16. The prevalence of claims about nutritional content on food packaging in the United States has increased in recent years as manufacturers have sought to provide consumers with nutrition information and thereby influence their purchasing decisions. The results of the FDA's most recent Food Label and Package Survey found that approximately 4.8 percent of food products sold in the United States had either a health claim or a qualified health claim on the food package, and that more than half (53.2%) of the food products reviewed had nutrient content claims on the packaging.
- 17. Treating cocoa with an alkalizing agent changes the chemical structure, taste, and appearance of cocoa and reduces its acidity and flavonol content. In addition, the alkalized cocoa in Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream products was processed with and thus contains potassium carbonate, a recognized synthetic substance.
- 18. According to a complaint filed with the FDA in 2010 by the Center for Science in the Public Interest ("CSPI"), and as confirmed by Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream labels, cocoa processed with

1	alkali is used as an ingredient in 36 of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream flavors which otherwise claim to b			
2	"all natural." Those Ice Cream flavors are:			
3	a. Ben & Jerry's "All-Natural" Flavors - Ice Cream			
4	Banana Split			
5	Boston Cream Pie			
]	Brownie Batter Cake Batter			
6	Cheesecake Brownie			
7	Cherry Garcia			
	Chocolate			
8	Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough			
9	Chocolate Fudge Brownie Chocolate Macadamia			
,,	Chubby Hubby			
10	Chunky Monkey			
11	Dublin Mudslide			
l li	Fossil Fuel			
12	Half Baked			
13	Imagine Whirled Peace			
	Karamel Sutra Milk & Cookies			
14	Mint Chocolate Chunk			
15	Mint Chocolate Cookie			
	Mud Pie			
16	Neapolitan Dynamite			
17	New York Super Fudge Chunk			
•	Oatmeal Cookie Chunk			
18	Peanut Butter Cup Phish Food			
19	S'mores			
`	Triple Caramel Chunk			
20	Turtle Soup			
21	Vanilla Caramel Fudge			
ĺ	b Dan & Januaria ((All Nicture 19) France Volume (France)			
22	b. Ben & Jerry's "All Natural" Frozen Yogurts (Froyos) Froyo Cherry Garcia			
23	Froyo Chocolate Fudge Brownie			
	Froyo Half-Baked			
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25	c. Ben & Jerry's "All Natural" Popsicles			
.	Cherry Garcia			
26	Fudgy Brownies Half Baked			
27	Tidit Dance			
	19. The CSPI warned as early as 2002 that B&J had been misbranding their products as			
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	"all natural" when in truth they were not.			
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	COMPLAINT for Damages, Equitable, Declaratory and Injunctive Relief			

"Ben & Jerry's enjoys a carefully-cultivated public image as an eco-friendly, worker-friendly brand—the kind of company whose label claims should be truthful," CSPI executive director Michael F. Jacobson said. "So it's sad that Ben & Jerry's is trying to pass off products laden with these factory-spun ingredients as 'natural,' when there's little natural about them. These ingredients are man-made and simply don't occur in nature."

- 20. According to the Ben & Jerry's corporate website, their product mission is to "make distribute and sell the finest quality "all natural" Ice Cream and euphoric concoctions with a continued commitment to incorporating wholesome, "natural" ingredients and incorporating business practices that respect the earth and the environment." (emphasis added). http://www.benjerry.com/activism/mission statement.
- 21. The labeling of products as "all natural" carry implicit health benefits to consumers benefits that consumers are often willing to pay a premium over comparable products that are not "all natural." Over the past 30 years B&J has cultivated and reinforced a corporate image that has catered to this "all natural" theme and have boldly emblazed this moniker on each and every one of its Ice Cream products, despite the fact it uses a synthetic ingredient in the form of alkalized cocoa.
- 22. B&J's has used the "all natural" label to shape its brand and sell its product. Yet, the existence of alkalized cocoa in its Ice Creams renders the use of the label "all natural," false and misleading. In manufacturing its Ice Cream products, Defendant had a choice between using natural or unnatural processed cocoa. It chose the later, but nonetheless labeled its Ice Cream products as "all natural." As a matter of its self characterized socially conscious corporate morality, and as matter of law, B&J must now reconcile its labeling with the true content of its products.

CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS

- 23. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of herself and on behalf of all other members of the Class ("Class"), defined as all consumers who, on or after September 28, 2006, purchased in the State of California B&J's Ice Cream products that were labeled all natural but contained alkalized cocoa. Plaintiff brings this Class pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(a), and (b)(1), 23(b)(2) and 23(b)(3).
- 24. Upon information and belief, there are thousands of Class members who are geographically dispersed throughout the State of California. Therefore, individual joinder of all members of the Class would be impracticable.

- 25. Common questions of law or fact exist as to all members of the Class. These questions predominate over the questions affecting only individual class members. These common legal or factual questions include:
 - a. whether B&J labels its Ice Cream products as "all natural;"
 - b. whether the alkalized cocoa used in B&J's Ice Cream products is natural;
 - c. whether B&J's "all natural" labeling of its Ice Cream products is likely to deceive class members or the general public;
 - d. whether B&J's representations are unlawful;
 - e. the appropriate measure of resitutionary disgorgement and/or restitution.
- 26. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class, in that Plaintiff was a consumer who purchased B&J's "all natural" Ice Cream products that contained alkalized cocoa in California during the Class Period. Plaintiff, therefore, is no different in any relevant respect from any other class member, and the relief sought is common to the Class.
- 27. Plaintiff is an adequate representative of the Class because her interests do not conflict with the interests of the class members he seeks to represent, and she has retained counsel competent and experienced in conducting complex class action litigation. Plaintiff and her counsel will adequately protect the interests of the Class.
- 28. A class action is superior to other available means for the fair and efficient adjudication of this dispute. The damages suffered by each individual class member likely will be relatively small, especially given the burden and expense of individual prosecution of the complex litigation necessitated by B&J's conduct. Thus, it would be virtually impossible for the class members individually to effectively redress the wrongs done to them. Moreover, even if the class members could afford individual actions, it would still not be preferable to class wide litigation. Individualized actions present the potential for inconsistent or contradictory judgments. By contrast, a class action presents far fewer management difficulties and provides the benefits of single adjudication, economies of scale, and comprehensive supervision by a single court.

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29. In the alternative, the Class may be certified because B&J has acted or refused to act on grounds generally applicable to the Class, thereby making appropriate preliminary and final equitable relief with respect to the Class.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION ("Unlawful" Business Practices in Violation of

The Unfair Competition Law ("UCL"), Bus. & Prof. Code 17200, et seq.)

- 30. Plaintiff hereby incorporates the foregoing paragraphs of this Complaint and restates them as if they were fully written herein.
- 31. The UCL defines unfair business competition to include any "unlawful, unfair or fraudulent" act or practice, as well as any "unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading" advertising. Cal. Bus. Prof. Code 17200.
- 32. A business act or practice is "unlawful" if it violates any established state or federal law.
- 33. California's Sherman Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Law ("Sherman Law"), Article 6, Section 110660 provides that: "Any food is misbranded if its labeling is false or misleading in any particular."
- 34. B&J's has violated, and continues to violate the Sherman Law, Article 6, Section 110660 and hence has also violated and continues to violate the "unlawful" prong of the UCL through its use of the term "all natural" associated with products that contained alkalized cocoa. By committing the acts and practices alleged above, B&J has engaged, and continues to be engaged, in unlawful business practices within the meaning of California Business and Professions Code 17200 et seq.
- 35. Through its unlawful acts and practices, B&J has obtained, and continues to unfairly obtain, money from members of the Class. As such, Plaintiff requests that this Court cause B&J to restore this money to Plaintiff and all Class members, to disgorge the profits B&J made on these transactions, and to enjoin B&J from continuing to violate the Unfair Competition Law as discussed herein. Otherwise, the Class may be irreparably harmed and/or denied an effective and complete remedy if such an order is not granted.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION ("Unfair" Business Practices in Violation of

The Unfair Competition Law ("UCL"), Bus. & Prof. Code 17200, et seq.)

- 36. Plaintiff hereby incorporates the foregoing paragraphs of this Complaint and restates them as if they were fully written herein.
- 37. The UCL defines unfair business competition to include any "unlawful, unfair or fraudulent" act or practice, as well as any "unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading" advertising. Cal. Bus. Prof. Code 17200.
- 38. A business act or practice is "unfair" under the Unfair Competition Law if the reasons, justifications and motives of the alleged wrongdoer are outweighed by the gravity of the harm to the alleged victims.
- 39. B&J has and continues to violate the "unfair" prong of the UCL through its misleading description of its products as all natural when indeed a main ingrediant is not natural and contains a synthetic substance. The gravity of the harm to members of the Class resulting from such unfair acts and practices outweighs any conceivable reasons, justifications and/or motives of B&J for engaging in such deceptive acts and practices. By committing the acts and practices alleged above, B&J has engaged, and continues to be engaged, in unfair business practices within the meaning of California Business and Professions Code 17200 et seq.
- 40. Through its unfair acts and practices, B&J has obtained, and continues to unfairly obtain, money from members of the Class. As such, Plaintiff requests that this Court cause B&J to restore this money to Plaintiff and all Class members, to disgorge the profits B & J has made on its Ice Cream products, and to enjoin B&J from continuing to violate the Unfair Competition Law as discussed herein. Otherwise, the Class may be irreparably harmed and/or denied an effective and complete remedy if such an order is not granted.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

("Fraudulent" Business Practices in Violation of The Unfair Competition Law ("UCL"), Bus. & Prof. Code 17200, et seq.)

- 41. Plaintiff hereby incorporates the foregoing paragraphs of this Complaint and restates them as if they were fully written herein.
- 42. The UCL defines unfair business competition to include any "unlawful, unfair or fraudulent" act or practice, as well as any "unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading" advertising. Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code §17200.
- 43. A business act or practice is "fraudulent" under the Unfair Competition Law if it actually deceives or is likely to deceive members of the consuming public.
- 44. B&J's acts and practices of mislabeling their products as all natural despite the fact they contained alkalized cocoa that is not natural and also contains a synthetic substance has the effect of misleading consumers into believing the product something it is not.
- 45. As a result of the conduct described above, B&J has been, and will continue to be, unjustly enriched at the expense of Plaintiff and members of the proposed Class. Specifically, B&J has been unjustly enriched by the profits it has obtained from Plaintiff and the Class from the purchases of Ice Cream products made by them.
- 46. Through its unfair acts and practices, B&J has improperly obtained, and continues to improperly obtain, money from members of the Class. As such, Plaintiff requests that this Court cause B&J to restore this money to Plaintiff and all Class members, to disgorge the profits B & J has made on its Ice Cream products, and to enjoin B&J from continuing to violate the Unfair Competition Law as discussed herein. Otherwise, the Class may be irreparably harmed and/or denied an effective and complete remedy if such an order is not granted.

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION (False Advertising in Violation of California Business & Professions Code 17500, et seq.)

47. Plaintiff hereby incorporates the foregoing paragraphs of this Complaint and restates them as if they were fully written herein.

- 48. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference the allegations contained above. This cause of action is brought by Plaintiff on behalf of himself, the Class members, and the general public.
- 49. Defendant uses advertising on its packaging to sell its Ice Cream products. Defendant is disseminating advertising concerning its goods which by its very nature is deceptive, untrue, or misleading within the meaning of California Business & Professions Code 17500, et seq. because those advertising statements contained on its product labels are misleading and likely to deceive, and continue to deceive, members of the putative class and the general public.
- 50. In making and disseminating the statements alleged herein, Defendant knew or should have known that the statements were untrue or misleading, and acted in violation of California Business & Professions Code 17500, et seq.
- 51. The misrepresentations and non-disclosures by Defendant of the material facts detailed above constitute false and misleading advertising and therefore constitute a violation of, California Business & Professions Code 17500, et seq.
- 52. Through its deceptive acts and practices, Defendant has improperly and illegally obtained money from Plaintiff and members of the putative class. As such, Plaintiff requests that this Court cause Defendant to restore this money to Plaintiff and members of the putative class, and to enjoin Defendant from continuing to violate California Business & Professions Code §17500, et seq., as discussed above. Otherwise, Plaintiff and those similarly situated will continue to be harmed by Defendant's false and/or misleading advertising.
- 53. Pursuant to California Business & Professions Code 17535, Plaintiff seeks an order of this Court ordering Defendant to fully disclose the true nature of its misrepresentations. Plaintiff additionally requests an order requiring Defendant to disgorge its ill-gotten gains and/or award full restitution of all monies wrongfully acquired by Defendant by means of such acts of false advertising, plus interest and attorneys fees so as to restore any and all monies which were acquired and obtained by means of such untrue and misleading advertising, misrepresentations and omissions, and which ill-gotten gains are still retained by Defendant. Plaintiff and the putative Class may be irreparably harmed and/or denied an effective and complete remedy if such an order is not granted.

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54. Such conduct is ongoing and continues to this date. Plaintiff and the putative Class are therefore entitled to the relief described below.

FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION (Restitution Based On Quasi-Contract/Unjust Enrichment)

- 63. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully rewritten herein. Plaintiff pleads this Count in the alternative.
- 64. B&J's conduct in enticing Plaintiff and the Class to purchase its Ice Cream products through its false and misleading packaging as described throughout this Complaint is unlawful because the statements contained on its product labels are untrue. B&J took monies from Plaintiffs and Class members for a product promised to be "all natural," even though the product it sold is not natural as specified throughout this Complaint. B&J has been unjustly enriched at the expense of Plaintiffs and the Class members as result of its unlawful conduct alleged herein, thereby creating a quasi-contractual obligation on B&J to restore these ill-gotten gains to Plaintiffs and the Class.
- 65. As a direct and proximate result of B&J's unjust enrichment, Plaintiffs and the Class members are entitled to restitution or restitutionary disgorgement in an amount to be proved at trial.

PRAYER

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, on behalf of himself and on behalf of the other members of the Class, requests award and relief as follows:

- A. An order certifying that this action is properly brought and may be maintained as a class action, that Plaintiff be appointed Class Representative and Plaintiff's counsel be appointed Class Counsel.
- B. Restitution in such amount that Plaintiff and all Class members paid to purchase Ice Cream products, or the profits B&J obtained from those transactions.
- An order enjoining B&J from advertising its products misleadingly, in violation of C. California's Sherman Food, Drug and Cosmetic Law and regulations.
- D. An order awarding Plaintiff her costs of suit, including reasonable attorneys' fees and pre and post-judgment interest.

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1	E. An order requiring an accounting for, and imposition of a constructive trust upon, a			
2	monies received by B&J as a result of the unfair, misleading, fraudulent and unlawful condu			
3	alleged herein.			
4	F. Such other and further relief as may be deemed necessary or appropriate.			
5	DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL			
6	Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury on all causes of action and/or issues so triable.			
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8	Dated: September	29, 2010	By: s/Michael D. Braun	
9			Michael D. Braun	
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